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LANGUAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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THIS ISSUE:

TOTAL IMMERSION

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LANGUAGE HIGHLIGHTS

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SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR,
25X1A [REDACTED] EXTENSION 3271, ROOM 406,
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUILDING.**

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TOTAL

"FLUENT FRENCH IN
FOURTEEN DAYS"

"INSTANT SPANISH"

"LEARN GERMAN
FAST AND EASY"

You've probably seen some of the ballyhoo in the newspapers about total immersion language training. One school promises fluency in just a few weeks, another guarantees a certain competency in a few days or even hours. How much truth is there in these claims? How effective is total immersion training? And if it's as good as they say it is, why is it that the Foreign Service Institute, the Defense Language Institute, and the Language School of OTR are not using it for quick, emergency training requirements?

The method consists of taking a student for up to twelve hours a day and subjecting him to a series of teachers who are native speakers and who talk to him in the target language only. No single word of English is used. One school that promises fluency in two or three weeks, seemingly unaware of the contradiction, quotes the evaluation of one student -- described as an excellent student who states that with a few months' practice in the language in the country where it is spoken he expects to be fluent.

To an extent, the method works. If the student really has high aptitude, and particularly if there is a factor present that

IMMERSION

FSI calls "leverage," the results may be impressive. Leverage consists of a proficiency in a closely related field. If a student has studied French in school and reads well but speaks poorly, the reading knowledge give him "leverage" for the improvement of his speaking ability. Proficiency in a related language also gives leverage. Good proficiency in Spanish gives leverage for the learning of Portuguese and vice versa. The same is true of other closely related languages, such as Lao and Thai.

Where there is no leverage, as when a student starts with a 0 proficiency in a non-European language, results are generally disappointing. The Agency's only experience in this line was with a student sent out for two weeks of total immersion in Vietnamese. The commercial school gave him a final report that indicated excellent progress, and the student felt that he had done well, but a language test showed that he could distinguish and use not even half of the ten Vietnamese vowels, had trouble with several of the consonants, and had almost no conception of the use of tones or of how to form a sentence in Vietnamese. He had difficulty understanding and being understood by any Vietnamese who had not taken part in his training.

"Total immersion" trainees tend to emphasize the fact that they feel under heavy stress throughout the course, and that unless they have at least three instructors in relays, the instructors seem to be under stress as well. This is not surprising since the method of total immersion was invented by the National Institute of Mental Health, not as a means for teaching language, but as a situation for generating mental stress. The experiment concerned human reactions to situations of stress, and it was decided that the most stressful possible situation would be to expose the test subjects to a foreign language only, without the opportunity of hearing or speaking their native tongue. Proponents of total immersion as a teaching method say that stress and the resulting fatigue do not impede learning. They even claim that learning is enhanced by fatigue. Both these claims await objective verification. Naturally, the schools do not publicize figures on how many persons enter total immersion training but fail to complete it. The drop-out rate, particularly on Monday of the second week, is said to be substantial.

Students almost unanimously register doubts about retention of what they have learned. They are discouraged by the amount they forget even over the weekends while in training and feel that, if the training is to result in anything useful,

they must start using the language almost immediately. Retention is a problem in any language, but it is probably likely that -- as the students seem to fear -- it is more of a problem in total immersion, because there is less opportunity for newly-learned responses to be reinforced.



"TOTAL IMMERSION" IN THE OTR LANGUAGE

SCHOOL

In spite of all the drawbacks we have described, total immersion has an important place in language training, but not as a way to start the training. One of the most difficult transitions for the student to make is from performing language drills in the classroom to using the language in real situations. At the Language School, when a class has reached the point of knowing most of the structures of a language, the students spend half a week at a safehouse in the country, where they speak only the target language. The safehouse is commodious and comfortable, beautifully situated on a secluded hillside, with a patio, lawn, and badminton court. The students prepare their own meals together with their instructors and use the language they are studying in all the facets of day-to-day life. This is not quite total immersion, since the student does not have someone hammering the target language at him individually for twelve hours a day. He is exposed to the language during all his waking hours, however, and he is encouraged not to withdraw into a corner and

say nothing. This is often rather stressful in itself, and some groups arrange for an hour in the afternoon when the students withdraw to read or study. No English is spoken, but the student has a respite from the constant use of the target language.

This approach is far more effective than the common concept of total immersion, both because it is a bit less intense and -- more importantly -- because the student, by the time he goes to the total immersion training facility, is far from a rank beginner. He is not struggling with a completely strange language. He is simply required to use the fairly substantial vocabulary and structural knowledge he has already acquired for actual communication in life-like situations -- at the dinner table, at the card table, in after-dinner conversation, or while strolling down a country road with a native speaker.

It is interesting to watch a class before and after this phase of training. Before the students leave for the safehouse, there is little use of the target language when the class is not in session. Some of the higher-aptitude students may occasionally put a sentence together, or apply a sentence from a memorized dialogue in an appropriate situation, but this is the exception rather than the rule. After their return, a good part of their conversation with each other will be in the target language. Another curious feature is that the students are usually not aware of the substantial progress they have made in so short a time. They are often rather surprised if an instructor who was not with them on the exercise compliments them on how well they are doing since their return.

This approach differs, too, from the usual university French House or Russian House or even from the Defense Language Institute's language barracks. The language house at a university gives the student many chances to practice his language, but he hears English for the greater part of every day, in classes and off and on campus. On the other hand, the language house spreads its benefits over at least a full term, so it does not need to be as intense as the Language School's safehouse exercise.

FSI is using a similar exercise in its Vietnamese courses, but so far has not extended it to students of other languages. FSI also approaches even more closely the commercial version of total immersion in its HILT program. HILT stands for High Intensity Leverage Training, and "leverage" is the most important word in the title. This program is used only when the trainee has the leverage of a good reading proficiency in the target language or a good proficiency in a closely related language. In such cases, a few weeks of eight contact hours a day, followed by training in a regular class, have produced excellent results.

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WHEREFORE APTITUDE TESTS ? ? ?

Before hiring new employees, Agency managers naturally want to know if they have the talent to master a foreign language, therefore when most Agency personnel come on duty they take some sort of language aptitude test. Generally speaking, the aptitude test is a good indicator of a person's ability to learn a foreign language. A high score usually means that the person can learn a foreign language rather easily, and the converse is true for low scores. These results have been used over the years in hiring people and deciding whether or not to invest time in extended language training.

Some employees have felt that a low aptitude score was a mark against them or that it represented a deficiency in their overall capability. Low aptitude on a language test is not directly correlated with general intelligence nor does it mean that a person cannot learn a language. The Agency employs a significant number of people who are skilled and qualified in other areas but who have low language aptitude. It is also known that language students with low aptitudes who want to learn and are willing to invest the time and effort can usually develop a useful skill in a foreign language.

About two years ago the Language School decided that all language students should take or have taken the Modern Language Aptitude (MLAT), even though the results of the Artificial Language Aptitude Test (ALAT), normally administered to new employees, correlated rather well with the MLAT. The MLAT gives a variety of information not easily obtainable from the results of the ALAT and other aptitude tests.

The MLAT gives specific information on a person's ability to memorize data received

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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WHEREFORE APTITUDE TESTS?

visually and aurally, to hear sounds properly and make discriminations between similar sounds, to understand grammatical concepts and sentence structure, and to examine a person's flexibility in looking at language problems in a new way. All of these characteristics are useful to the Language School staff and faculty in predicting possible learning problems of the student and in preparing to cope with these problems in the classroom. While all parts of the test are important for diagnostic purposes, a recent study has shown that extreme difficulty with Part III, which gives indication of a person's mental flexibility, usually indicates a possible severe language problem. It indicates that a person may not be willing to accept the different structures or sounds he experiences in learning and using a foreign language.

Although the Language School will not refuse to accept a student on account of low aptitude, supervisors and training officers should be prepared for potential learning problems with low aptitude students. It is possible that these students will be unable to keep up with a normal class.

Language aptitude tests on the whole are fairly reliable indicators of ability to learn a second or third language. Personnel should not be written off because of a low score, because motivation and hard work can overcome low aptitude. There have been instances of low aptitude hard-working students exceeding the skill of high aptitude classmates. As long as the test is used fairly, with the individual getting the benefit of the doubt on test results, it will continue to be a useful predictor for both management and the Language School.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTING

"Hello, Language Testing? I'd like to discuss a language proficiency grade you gave to one of my employees. I'm sure you've made a mistake."



"What seems to be the problem?"



"Well, this fellow, Joseph Lee, took a Spanish test last week, and you gave him a 2+ in speaking. Now, we know for a fact that he is at least a 3+, maybe even a 4 in speaking."



"Oh, was he tested before at that level?"



"No, but I've known Joe for many years. He's been overseas in a Spanish-speaking country for the past five years and everyone says he speaks Spanish almost like a native. You know, he's a wonderful person, very outgoing, and he gets along with everyone. He has always had fine fitness reports and does his job much better than another of our employees who received a 3 in speaking."



"OK, let's take one thing at a time. Where did Mr. Lee learn his Spanish?"

"Well, as I recall, he never had any formal instruction, but he's a real whiz at picking up languages. Why, he speaks German and Vietnamese fluently, too -- he picked them up on his tours of duty without any problems at all."



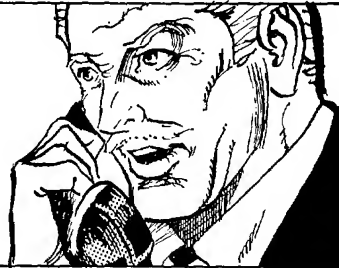
"Your division called about this yesterday, and we have reviewed and analyzed the tape of the test. We found that although his speech flows right along and he can discuss many difficult topics, the quality and accuracy of his speaking are clearly within the 2+ range. His vocabulary, although extensive, is not precise; he has picked up a habit of taking an English word and giving it a so-called Spanish ending if he doesn't know the Spanish word, and this occurs fairly regularly. He doesn't differentiate properly among verb tenses, and he leans to a great extent on verb stems, mixing up number and person. In nouns and adjectives, he has trouble with gender. This pattern is certainly very common among people who have never had any formal language training, and it can cause misunderstandings as to what is actually being said. You have probably noticed that Mr. Lee's level in oral comprehension was much higher than his speaking level; this, too, is a common occurrence in cases of this type."

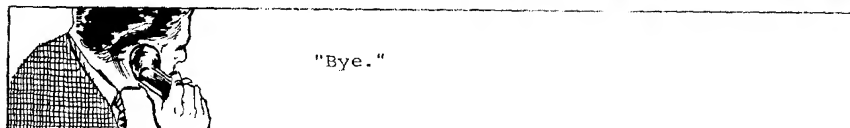
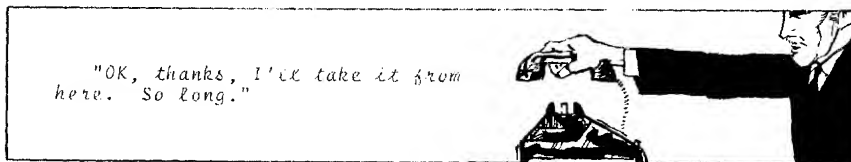
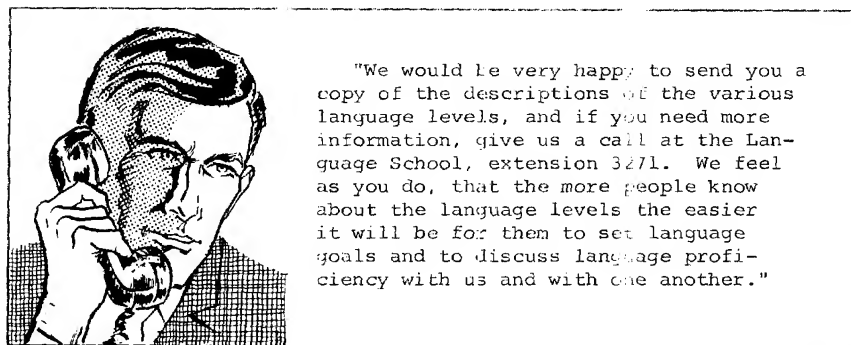
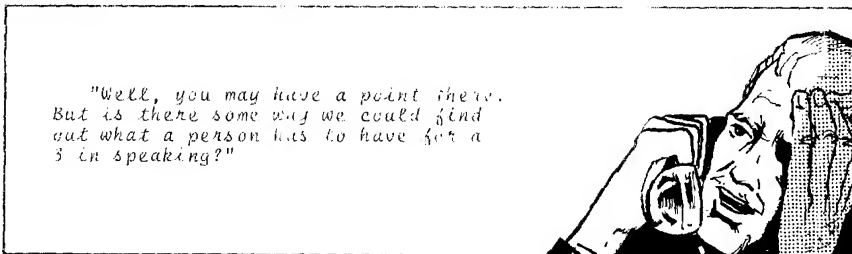
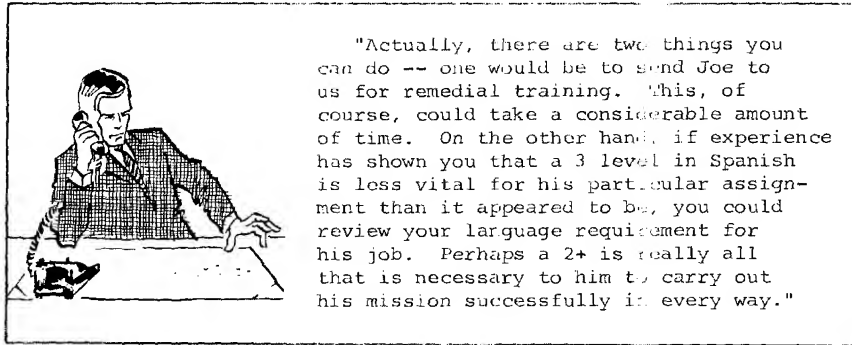
"Really? Now I know that you people were all wrong in evaluating his proficiency. You nitpick on little details, and you ignore completely his superb sense of communication and the high degree of his success on the job."



"You must realize that it is not our function, nor indeed do we have the information or the facilities to judge Mr. Lee's personality or job effectiveness; this is strictly within your jurisdiction. We evaluate only his ability to handle a language, in accordance with certain criteria which have been developed and refined for linguistic validity. It is possible to communicate without the use of language at all -- by gestures, for example, or by drawing pictures. There are many people who are able to communicate beautifully, not because of the way they handle a language, but rather in spite of it. You should also bear in mind that courtesy generally forbids a person to point out language errors to a foreigner, and that a great many of the people our employees deal with are accustomed to English speakers and the types of errors they make. We have, conversely, encountered cases where an individual has a fine command of a language but absolutely flunks out on the job. Again, we can only evaluate the language proficiency and not the many other factors that make up a person's effectiveness."

"But why penalize Joe? We want to give him a promotion, and we can't do it unless you give him a 3 in Spanish. What am I going to do now?"





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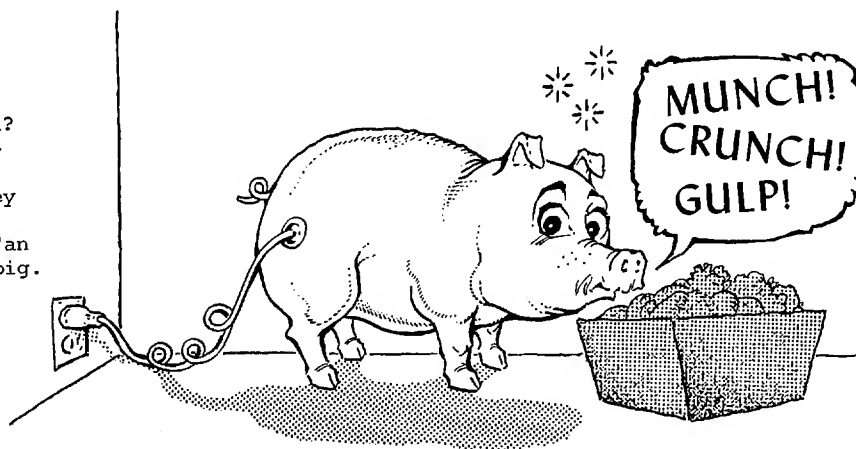
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MUNCH! CRUNCH! GULP!

In the modern Chinese vocabulary, everything that operates by electricity starts with the word tien, "electricity," originally "lightning." Thus we find tienlu, "electric road -- a circuit," tienmen, "electric gate -- a switch," as well as tienhua,

"electric language -- a telephone," and tienpao, "electric report -- a telegram." Then came the garbage disposal, and its name had to start with tien, too. Can you guess what other word the Chinese added? With unsailable logic, they named it tienchu, "an electric pig."



SPANISH PROGRAMMATIC INSTRUCTION

When you go to a foreign country you want to be able to speak to the people who live there, at least to make your needs known, to ask for the information you want, and feel reasonably sure that the people understand you. These, in fact, are the basic objectives of most speaking language courses; however, a new course of programmatic Spanish, developed by the Foreign Service Institute and recently tried out at the Language School, promises to achieve these goals quite effectively and perhaps more efficiently than the conventional aural-oral language course.

The entire course takes from 6 to 10 weeks. The running time is flexible, and this is one of the advantages of programmatic instruction -- the student works at his own speed. He may complete the material as slowly or as quickly as it is possible for him to absorb it. Another advantage is that both full-time and part-time students begin in the same class. As the class progresses, students may be separated according to their ability in the language and rate of progress. It is still possible, however, to handle students who are only one or two units apart in the same class hour.

The course is divided into three stages. A typical day in each of the three stages would look like this:

Stage I	2 hours class	4 hours lab
Stage II	3 hours class	3 hours lab
Stage III	5 hours class	1 hour lab

The hours of class and lab work alternate according to the preferences of the students and teachers. Class work increases as the student becomes proficient enough in the structural patterns so that he can carry on substantive conversations.

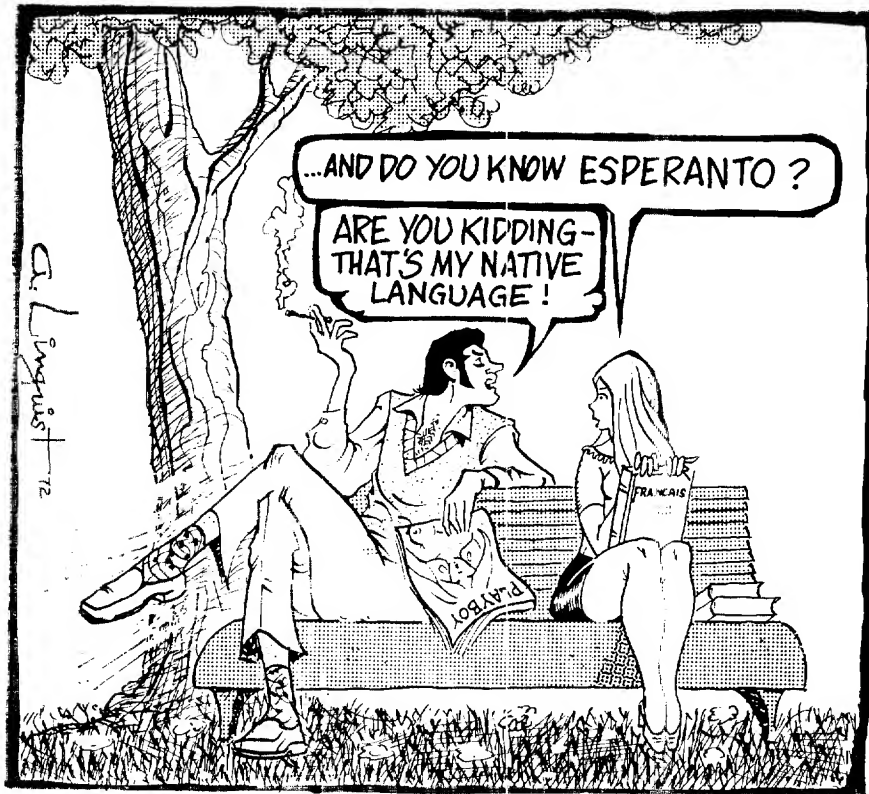
Throughout the course the student administers self-tests, thus he is always aware of his own progress. All new material is presented first on tape, following which the instructor checks the student on the material he is expected to have learned with the help of the tape. In

class sessions there is plenty of opportunity to converse with the class instructor and classmates, thus reinforcing systematically the vocabulary and grammatical structures.

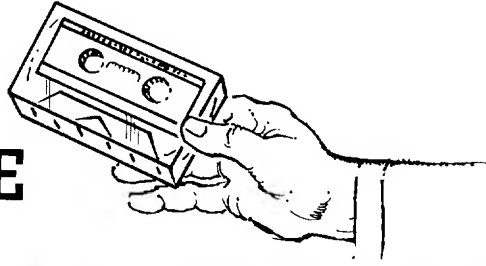
Another important feature of this system is the fact that all of essential Spanish grammar is presented in this short course. The student learns only 1,000 vocabulary items, but experiments at FBI have proved that on completion of Programmatic Spanish a student can read a newspaper and understand the gist even of editorials, although he might have to use a dictionary for infrequent words. What matters is that he now has a firm grasp of Spanish structure and an overall picture of the language.

Although the course does not emphasize reading and writing in the language, these two skills are learned, along with training in structure, through exercises and supplementary practice.

The Language School has adopted Programmatic Spanish on an experimental basis. To date, the results have been satisfactory. Since November the School has been running two classes, one the conventional aural-oral Spanish course and one in Programmatic Spanish, for the purpose of comparing student progress, attitudes, and overall results.



THE ARRIVAL OF THE CASSETTE IN LANGUAGE TRAINING



Two years ago, OTR's Language School became the first of the government schools to consider using cassette recorders in language training. In November 1969, looking for ways to respond to student's frequent requests to borrow tapes and tape recorders for home study, the Language School bought five cassette recorders and issued them on a trial basis to the members of a small French class. The six-month trial was a feasibility study with a number of aims, including that of testing student reaction to carrying home a hip-pocket language laboratory.

Reaction was enthusiastic from the first day of the program. Users of cassettes found that their automobiles -- while they commuted to and from the Washington suburbs -- became laboratories on wheels. Students could now make productive use of time otherwise wasted. One student, using an earplug, listened to tapes while riding the bus; another, a dependent wife, practiced French at home while ironing clothes. In each case students found that they could significantly increase the amount of contact time they had with the language, and they came to class better prepared. As advantages for the language learner the students cited the same characteristics of the cassette which give it a margin of superiority over reel-to-reel recorders in general: the battery-powered recorder is so small that it can go anywhere, and tape-threading -- with all its problems -- disappears.

From the laboratory technician's point of view, there are other advantages.

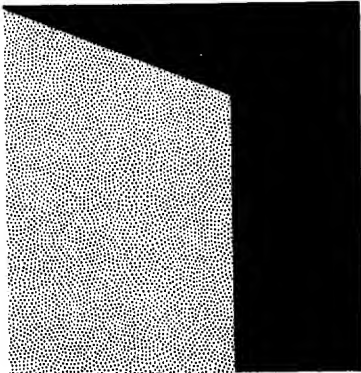
- 1) Since the tape is enclosed in plastic, it is not susceptible to spillage or mishandling, and breakage is rare.
- 2) Cassettes can easily be made so that taped lessons are not erasable.
- 3) Tapes can be stored in less than half the space required by standard 7-inch reels. Another plus, of course, is the difference in cost between cassette recorders and standard tape recorders. Among the five brands we tested we found no

significant differences in mechanical quality or electronic fidelity, and decided that a recorder priced at under \$30.00 would meet our needs.

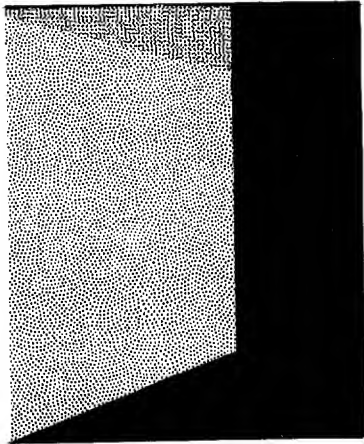
Given these advantages and impressed by the unequivocally favorable student response during the six-month trial period, the Language School began a second phase of experimentation by building a small laboratory in which cassette recorders replaced the usual reel-to-reel equipment. In addition, high-speed reel-to-cassette duplicating equipment was purchased, additional portable recorders were bought for an expanded take-home program, and procedures were worked out for duplicating and distributing tapes. At this writing the experiment is over, having been accepted as a complete success. The experimental lab has been transferred to the language lab in the Headquarters building (Room LD1609), which is now a fully operating cassette-only laboratory; and the cassette loan program has been enlarged, refined, and integrated into CIA's overall language development program.

The Language School's experience and conclusions concerning cassettes have been made known to the other members of the government's language training community (Foreign Service Institute, Defense Language Institute, USIA, etc.), and they have followed our lead. USIA, for example, is now using cassettes exclusively in teaching English overseas. Outside the government, universities and secondary schools, too, are actively using or examining the use of cassettes in language teaching.

The Language School is convinced that the cassette is here to stay, and we are committed to it as a tool for language teaching. If nothing else, it has the advantage of making taped foreign language material more accessible to more people. Before long, all the material we now have on our language laboratory shelves will be on cassettes, available not only for use in the lab, but for use by any Agency employee in his own home or office, his car, or wherever he happens to be.



HEADQUARTERS LANGUAGE LAB REMODELED



In addition to being newly equipped with cassette recorders, as mentioned elsewhere in this issue, the Headquarters language lab (Room 1D1609) has also been refurbished with new study carrels. The changeover to new and larger carrels necessitated reducing somewhat the number of study positions available. There has also been a temporary reduction in the number and variety of language study materials, but as materials are requested, the files of cassette materials will be expanded. The new cassette recorders are of the two-track variety, with the listen-record capability which students find so desirable.

The lab is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However, it is unmanned and students are on their own when using the facility. The cabinets containing cassette materials are clearly identified and there are printed directions in each booth which make operating the equipment relatively easy. Should help be needed, it can be made available on a prearranged basis by calling the School (extension 3471). Inasmuch as there is no attendant assigned to the facility, its orderliness and the workability of the equipment are almost entirely dependent on the cooperation of those using the lab.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING ABROAD

The magnitude of the U.S. government's involvement in English teaching abroad is not widely realized, although classes are being conducted on a regular basis overseas in more than 80 countries.

Five principal agencies of the government (USIA, AID, the Department of State, the Peace Corps, and the Defense Department) sponsor programs furthering the use of English as a lingua franca, which can open doors to scientific and technical knowledge indispensable to the economic and political development of vast areas of the world. The Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs has responsibility for coordinating U.S. government efforts in this field. Overseas, the coordinating responsibility rests with the U.S. Ambassador.



USIA organizes adult English teaching programs in 56 countries with a total enrollment of more than 285,000 people. Most of these courses are given in binational centers, information and cultural centers, and language institutes. These institutions also provide intensive language training for participants and grantees under the AID and State Department programs to prepare them for study in American universities. With the cooperation of local ministries of education, USIA also sponsors seminars and workshops for teachers of English. These seminars not only develop the teachers' own proficiency in English, but also improve their teaching methods and further their knowledge about the United States. USIA produces its own texts and teaching aids to accompany its programs. As a supplement to direct student-teacher courses, the Voice of America has three English-by-radio series designed for advanced students and teachers of English. VOA has also broadcast English-by-TV series offering a total of 260 quarter-hour lessons at the beginner and intermediate levels. Local supplementary materials are usually added.

Latin America has more binational centers than any other area of the world. Next in order are the Far East and Near East. The African effort is primarily in the form of informal classes taught by USIA officers, using materials and guidance supplied by the home office.

AID is concerned with the development and strengthening of English teaching in the aided country's indigenous schools, since English is the language of instruction for participants who come to the United States under AID's technical assistance program to study and train in their specialized fields. English, as the established language of international communication, is essential to the economic develop-



ment of many areas of the world and must be acquired through the educational system of the country concerned. AID supplements overseas training by intensive language study in institutions in the United States prior to the participants' entering into technical training here. For example, Georgetown University has an American Language Institute which serves this purpose. Where in-country training cannot be provided, AID sets up facilities of its own or sometimes uses institutions in third countries. AID has relied largely upon American universities to implement projects designed to build local capabilities to teach English. Under contract with AID and with the support and participation of the government concerned, American universities have provided teams of experts to assist in training new teachers, retraining teachers

on hand, developing textbooks and other teaching materials for use in both the teacher training programs and in the schools, and revising school curricula.

The Department of State through its programs of educational exchange and grants has assisted in the improvement of English language teaching in schools and universities throughout the world. The grantees are sometimes called upon to advise and assist universities or ministries of education in the development of teaching materials and in the training of local teachers through workshops. The State Department also provides full or partial grants for foreign students to study in American universities. As all courses are in English, brush-up or intensive English training is provided as part of the orientation.

According to a recent survey, about 2,200 Peace Corps volunteers were teaching English as their primary job assignment, some 700 others were teaching English in elementary schools along with other subjects, and almost all volunteers, regardless of their primary job assignment, were teaching English as an extracurricular activity.

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Under the Military Assistance Program (MAP), English language training is provided to foreign military personnel who require English either as a prerequisite to specialized training in their own countries or in the U.S. or who need English to operate or maintain military equipment provided by the U.S. to the host country under the program. In 45 allied countries about 100,000 foreign students receive English language training under this program. About 2,000 foreign students have been receiving advanced training each year at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. The Defense Language Institute, established in 1963, supervises and directs this English language training program and develops standardized teaching materials for the military language programs.

The Office of Education, under contract with both the State Department and AID, supervises the training of foreign teachers of English who are brought to the United States under programs of these agencies. The Office also assists the Department of State in recruiting American teachers who receive grants under State's program to teach English in secondary schools and teacher training colleges abroad.

In addition to American involvement in English teaching around the world, other English-speaking countries, such as Great Britain, as well as international organizations (UNESCO and others) are actively engaged in meeting the demand for instruction in English. And yet, even with all these programs, the common assumption on the part of many Americans travelling abroad that "Everyone speaks English" is not yet true. In 1966, only 20% of the entire German population and 37% of the youth could speak some English. In the Philippines, where English had once been instituted as the medium of instruction after the second grade, the impetus in recent years to use the national language has caused a deterioration of English instruction, and of course has decreased the number of future speakers of English. In Sweden children now learn English beginning in the fourth grade. This reform was introduced in 1954, but the majority of Swedes outside of Stockholm educated before 1954 does not speak or understand English, contrary to popular misconception. In Stockholm, however, it is estimated that 50% of the educated people speak and understand English well.

The U.S. government will undoubtedly continue its English programs overseas, but the above figures indicate that much more effort is needed before English becomes truly the international language. Until that time, we can communicate better with our world-wide neighbors by learning a little of their language.

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